

221 fields made ready for the return of the cattle to
241 them. Each 'hard' day is more than welcome, for
462 then work in the fields can go on. By St. Patrick's
day, they say in Clare, the potatoes should all be
'down'; after that there still remains much to do,
[776] though the worst is over. St. Patrick promised that
after his day *every* day would 'come hard'.

Through the rest of the spring, work is at its
most intense. Potatoes must be 'stirred' and
'landed'; other root crops 'put down'. March and
April see the birth of calves and the beginning of
the season of greater milk yields and intensified
butter-making. Before that in February and March
[447] the 'great spring fairs' take place, and the year's
buying and selling of cattle must be done.

Then, gradually, with the return of warm
weather and the drying-off of the land, Irish
summer begins. May is often the first summer
month. Soon the bogs are dry enough for cutting
the year's supply of turf and for stacking it to dry
under the summer warmth at the bog's edge.

Once the turf is cut and stacked, the first fruits
of the farmer's labour begin to appear. The first
crop is cabbage, which was planted at odd times
very early. It is practically the only green of the
diet and old people remember June or July *an*
● [261] *chabáiste*, 'the hungry month', when a delayed
potato crop might condemn them to a month or
more of semi-starvation upon cabbage. Today new
varieties of potatoes mature as early as June. But

167 landscape combined with financial help
 657 of such varied forms that one may see
 the welfare state in action. Inishbofin,
 four miles beyond the coast of Conne-
 [131] mara (10° 10' W. to 10° 15' W.), is sepa-
 rated by a strait almost one mile
 wide from the nearest inhabited island,
 Inishark. Some of the neighboring
 311 small uninhabited islands are useful
 132 sheep pastures and others merely reefs
 dangerous to shipping. In calm weather
 these islands rise above deep clear
 waters, but in storms Atlantic waves
 send spray to a height of 300 feet and
 more^s and a dangerous swell sweeps
 through intricate channels. The in-
 habitants, farmers and farmer-fisher-
 men are at the mercy of the weather.
 In 1954 the dry spring resulted in a
 short growth of oats and barley straw
 and a feeble growth of potatoes; the
 fishermen's lobster pots were swept out
 to sea, replaced and then swept out
 again; and the hookers could not be
 taken out in waters always dangerous
 but vastly more so when the weather
 consists of an apparently endless series
 of deep depressions.

505 Isolation is a major problem, but on
 four days a week in summer and three
 days a week in winter a hooker runs
 from the pier at Cleggan to the island,
 where it is rarely able to berth at the
 pier, so that all passengers and goods
 must be put over the side into a cur-
 ragh and rowed ashore. In winter the
 island may be storm-bound for as much
 as a fortnight at a time, and almost
 • [261] every household has a bag of meal kept
 for such an emergency. Special ar-
 rangements have to be made for the
 shipment of cattle; fish can be taken
 for sale to the mainland in rowing
 boats only during favorable weather;
 and no eggs are sold owing to transport
 problems.

[137] On the cliffs of the island the vegetation is
 halophytic and consists generally of a low sward
 of seapink (*Psamma maritima*).

[p. 203(A)]